

Elk Plan

- What is it?
- Where did it come from?
- Where is it today?

What is it?

- Intended to “...provide guidance to wildlife and land managers....”
- Developed thru public process; adopted by FWP Commission
- History of elk and elk management in Montana
- Elk Management Units, objectives and season packages, objective-driven management

Elk Management Units (EMU)

- 44 Elk Management Units
- Comprised of single Hunting Districts or groups of Hunting Districts
- Similar ecological characteristics; encompass yearlong distribution of elk
- Examples: Bob Marshall EMU, Gravelly EMU

Objectives

- “...all objective numbers are for counted numbers without expansion to estimations.”
- “...presented as a point estimate, but usually with a range around the point.”
- All EMUs have objectives, not all HDs

Objectives established using the following considerations:

- “.... history of long-term trend counts and discussions with landowners. Objectives for number of elk counted below history of long-term trend counts and discussions levels of excessive damage problems.”
- “Input from sportspersons, public land managers, and the general public.....”

Setting objectives....

- “Increasingly.....Community Working Groups are formed.”

Setting objectives....

- “It is apparent in many areas, especially with significant elk use of private land, that the ecological potential for elk numbers is substantially above the numbers sustainable based on landowner tolerance.”

Setting objectives....

- “As process evolves and we gain information, may be need to change Population Objectives and Regulation Packages. Similarly, catastrophic events that create significant habitat changes, reasonable recommendations from Community Working Groups, and changes in landownership might affect elk populations, objectives, and regulations.”

Regulations

- Liberal where status over objective
- Standard where status at objective (+/-20%)
- Restrictive where status below objective
- Objectives fixed, regulations variable

Where did it come from?

- First plan in 1978
- Comprehensive overhaul in 1992 (2nd plan)
- Nov 2002 public scoping begins for current plan
- Mailing sent to 1,290 landowners with at least 640 acres, 2,024 randomly selected elk hunters, 409 individuals/ groups who sent scoping comments, and 204 individuals/groups on FWP “interested participant” list. Final adopted Dec 2004.

Where is it today?

- 28 EMUs (64%) over objective
- 16 EMUs (36%) at or below objective
- EMU may be over, HDs under, vice versa